

# **Media-Enabled Insurgency as a Revolution in Military Affairs**

**A Monograph  
by  
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## **Abstract**

**MEDIA-ENABLED INSURGENCY AS A REVOLUTION IN MILITARY AFFAIRS** by MAJ Patrick E. Proctor, US Army, 68.

The enemy in Iraq has been able to use small, tactically insignificant attacks, amplified by the media, to erode the will of the American people to prosecute the war in Iraq. This monograph uses the model for a revolution in military affairs proposed by Williamson Murray and MacGregor Knox to examine this new enemy capability and try to understand why it is so effective. This monograph also draws on historical examples of the components of this capability in order to find potential weaknesses the US military can exploit. It is the conclusion of this monograph that a number of cultural and legal factors in the United States have combined to intentionally handicap the US military's ability to influence populations through the media. It is this weakness that the enemy is exploiting to such great effect in Iraq.

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# Introduction

## Background

If conventional wisdom is correct, that insurgencies take an average of ten years to defeat,<sup>1</sup> then a nation engaged in a war of counterinsurgency must have the resolve to engage in a long, difficult struggle, replete with setbacks and disappointments. Clausewitz posited that war is a phenomenon “suspended between three magnets”: passion (most associated with the people), reason (most associated with government), and chance (the realm of the military).<sup>2</sup> If this is correct, a government that seeks to prosecute a war of counterinsurgency must prepare its people for the difficult challenges of such a struggle, and maintain their will until the war is successfully concluded.

In Operation Iraqi Freedom, it appears that the enemy understands this. The enemy has used small, tactically insignificant attacks, magnified by the megaphone of the media, to directly attack the will of the American people to prosecute the war in Iraq. This enemy capability is, in a word, revolutionary. It represents a shift in the very nature of warfare: a military force now has the ability to bypass completely the tactical and operational capabilities of its opponent and directly attack his strategic center of gravity, the will of his people to fight. This capability undermines the conventional military supremacy of the United States and, if left unchecked, could well cause the US military to leave Iraq before its operational objectives are accomplished. More importantly, if methods are not found to combat this capability, it could proliferate to other enemies of the United States. Ultimately, this capability could neutralize the ability of the US to exert military power in pursuit of any but the most limited operational objectives in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Jill Carroll, “Ordinary Iraqis bear brunt of war,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 15 April 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 89.

## Methodology

The goal of this monograph is to examine the nature of this new enemy capability<sup>3</sup> and determine why it is so effective. Military effectiveness derives from the potency of a military force, the impotency of its opponent, or both. This study will examine both this enemy capability and the US military's ability to resist it in an attempt to understand why, in Iraq, the enemy enjoys an asymmetric advantage in the battle for the will of the American people.

As a framework for this examination, this monograph will use the concept of military revolutions (MRs) and revolutions in military affairs (RMAs), proposed by McGregor Knox and Williamson Murray in *Dynamics of Military Revolution: 1300-2050*. In the interest of brevity, this study will focus on only two elements of this model, those elements that are unique to media-enabled insurgency and separate it from conventional insurgency.

This study relies heavily on current media reports, US military doctrine, and historical studies of both media technology and warfare. It also relies on interviews with both media and military affairs professionals. It draws on the writings of military commanders in recent professional journals. However, this study is most significant in that large portions of the work were researched by direct observation, on the ground, in areas of Iraq that are unavailable to any but the military observer. The author served a six-month tour inside the headquarters of Multi-National Force-Iraq, in Baghdad, working in the Communications Division and the Strategic Effects Information Operations Cell, completing the research for this monograph.

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<sup>3</sup> Of course, forces have weakened the resolve of competitors through the media in the past. The Conventional wisdom holds that the Tet Offensive was directed to attack the will of the American people to fight the war. Ang Cheng Guan, in the *Journal of Contemporary History*, examined this question using actual planning documents and minutes from meetings from North Vietnam from before the offensive. He found that the Tet Offensive (called the General Offensive-General Uprising in North Vietnam) was intended to break the strategic stalemate between the North and US military forces in Vietnam. Politburo documents clearly show that the campaign was intended to annihilate US forces and begin the third, decisive phase of the war, per classic Maoist insurgency doctrine. See Ang Cheng Guan, "Decision-Making Leading to the Tet Offensive (1968) - The Vietnamese Communist Perspective," *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no. 3 (July 1998): 341-353. The distinction here is that rather than a byproduct of tactical actions, in media-enabled insurgency, the media impact is the *intent* of tactical action.

## Assumptions

It is not the purpose of this monograph to prove that this enemy capability exists. This monograph rests on the foundations of the author's previous work, the master's thesis, *Defensive Operations in the Media Battlespace: Operation Iraqi Freedom*. A key finding of this thesis was that this enemy capability does exist and that, left unchecked, it could very well cause the premature withdrawal of US military forces from Iraq. In the interest of brevity, this monograph will stipulate that this finding is valid.

Second, this monograph seeks to examine historical examples (see the research questions, below) and tries to draw conclusions about actions that can be taken in the present to counter the enemy capability in question. Such endeavors are inherently fraught with peril. History happens in the context of its age. Lessons drawn from one era are not always directly applicable to other times. To mitigate this risk, this monograph will take two measures:

1. Narrow scope. Rather than drawing lessons from broad topics, this monograph will examine very specific activities, focused narrowly on the subject matter of this study.
2. Assumption of exclusion. This monograph will first seek to *disqualify* examples from history by identifying time or situational factors that make the example non-applicable to the current study. Only when all possible disqualifying factors have been ruled out will an example be used to draw conclusions.

## Definitions

In order to proceed with this investigation, it is necessary to define a few key terms around which the discussion will center. First, for the purposes of this monograph, "the enemy" will be defined as follows.

The Enemy: Nonstate actors, including (but not limited to) Al-Qaeda in Iraq, former Saddam Hussein loyalists (e.g., "Baathists"), and other violent organizations in Iraq, whose goal is the expulsion of the US military from Iraq, and whose primary tactic is terrorism and small-

scale attacks executed inside Iraq, but targeted to impact (directly or indirectly) the will of the American people.

The enemies of the US military in Iraq are legion. They range from those defined above, to those who simply want to exert primary influence over small regions of Iraq for material or political gain. Although there are many nonstate actors in Iraq who use terrorism and small-scale attacks in order to intimidate the Iraqi people for various reasons, it is reasonable to limit the examination to the enemy defined above because this is the element that exploits the media to attack the will of the American people to prosecute the war in Iraq. However, this is too critical a question to answer with a one-sentence definition. For that reason, the next section of this study (“The Enemy in Iraq”) is dedicated to this question.

For the sake of brevity, enemy capability which is the topic of this study will be referred to as “media-enabled insurgency.” The following is simply a working definition to begin discussion.

Media-enabled insurgency: The use of small, tactically insignificant attacks, amplified by the media, to erode the will of a conventional military opponent’s constituent population to prosecute war.

This monograph seeks to identify and examine the component parts of this revolutionary capability. In order to do this, this monograph will use the construct of military revolutions (MRs) and revolutions in military affairs (RMAs), proposed by McGregor Knox and Williamson Murray in *Dynamics of Military Revolution: 1300-2050*. Knox and Murray say of an MR, “the defining feature [of a military revolution] is that it fundamentally changes the framework of war.” But military revolutions do more than alter the military. They “recast society and the state as well as military organizations. They alter the capacity of states to create and project military power.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray, *Dynamics of Military Revolution: 1300-2050* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 6-14.

Knox and Murray describe RMAs as follows.

Military organizations embark upon an RMA by devising new ways of destroying their opponents. To do so they must come to grips with fundamental changes in the social, political, and military landscapes; in some cases they must anticipate those changes. Revolutions in military affairs require the assembly of a complex mix of tactical, organizational, doctrinal, and technological innovations in order to implement a new conceptual approach to warfare.<sup>5</sup>

In this construct, an MR is a fundamental change in warfare, society, and government.

RMAs are the semi-deliberate result of militaries trying to come to grips with the changes wrought by an MR.

Does this construct apply to media-enabled insurgency? Using the above definition, the enemy did embark on developing this capability to devise “new ways of destroying their opponents,” or at least defeating them, in the strategic sense. The enemy assembled “a complex mix of tactical, organization, doctrinal, and technological innovations in order to implement a new conceptual approach to warfare” (as will be detailed in the remainder of this monograph). This enemy capability is a “new conceptual approach to warfare” and gives the enemy an asymmetric advantage over the US military. This capability is only possible because of an MR (the telecommunications revolution; see “Context” below). So, by the definition Knox and Murray provide, this enemy capability is an RMA.

Based on this model, as it is defined above, an RMA consists of four supporting innovations:

1. Tactics
2. Organization
3. Doctrine
4. Technology

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<sup>5</sup> Knox and Murray, *Dynamics...*, 12.

However, this model fails to identify one other critical component of an RMA that is necessary to consider when analyzing a new capability using this historical model: the nature of the opponent. The RMA of German unrestricted submarine warfare would have been useless against an enemy that had no navy or maritime lines of communication. The RMA of Napoleonic warfare<sup>6</sup> was completely nullified by the Russians, who refused to face him in a decisive battle. An RMA exists only in the context of the enemy against which it is directed. The opponent is also a component of an RMA. Thus, for the purposes of this monograph, the list of component parts of an RMA will be amended as follows.

1. Tactics
2. Organization
3. Doctrine
4. Technology
5. Opponent

Unfortunately, this definition encompasses too many topics for the scope of this monograph. For that reason, this study will ignore tactics, organization, and doctrine. The definition provided above for media-enabled insurgency, to some extent, circumscribes the tactics of this RMA (“small, tactically insignificant attacks amplified by the media”—guerilla attacks on US military forces and terrorist attacks against civilians that garner news coverage). Organization will be described briefly in the next section (“The Enemy in Iraq”). Neither of these elements of the RMA are sufficiently novel to warrant examination in this brief study. The doctrine of media-enabled insurgency is a fascinating topic,<sup>7</sup> but derives from the fundamental opportunities created

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<sup>6</sup> Knox and Murray, *Dynamics...*, 6-14.

<sup>7</sup> In past conflicts, media did play a role. But before the emergence of contemporary telecommunications technology, this was a byproduct, rather than the aim, of military activities. Again, see Ang Cheng Guan, “Decision-Making Leading to the Tet Offensive (1968) - The Vietnamese Communist Perspective,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no. 3 (July 1998): 341-353.

by technology. Solely in the interest of brevity, it will be neglected here in favor of an examination of the technologies that produced it. Excluding these elements, this study is restricted to the following elements of an RMA:

1. Technology
2. Opponent

Neither of these terms has a specific military meaning. Thus, their definition will be taken from the Merriam-Webster dictionary:

Technology - a manner of accomplishing a task especially using technical processes, methods, or knowledge

Opponent - one that takes an opposite position (as in a debate, contest, or conflict)<sup>8</sup>

Of course, these definitions, because of their source, are not tailored to military application.<sup>9</sup> This monograph will only be concerned with them in relation to the enemy capability and the combatants being studied. Thus, this study will focus on the technology the enemy uses to exercise the capability and the opponent against which he exercises the capability (the United States).

## **Context**

If revolutions in military affairs are preceded by military revolutions, then what MR is responsible for the RMA in question, the enemy's capability to use the media to attack the will of the American people to prosecute the war in Iraq? One could say that the telecommunications revolution is a military revolution. It has certainly "recast society and state as well as military

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<sup>8</sup> Merriam-Webster Online. "Definition." [On-line] Available <http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary>; Internet: accessed 18 January 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, as Clausewitz reminds us, war is an extension of politics. We are primarily concerned with the military application of these terms because we are concerned with a primarily military/insurgent force, rather than a primarily political entity.

organizations.”<sup>10</sup> Americans are most familiar with the changes wrought by the Internet, but information technology has brought a steady increase in the productivity of the industrialized world for the past quarter century. For example, since 1973, American manufacturing output has increased by 114 percent. In 1973, America produced 22 percent more manufactured goods per head of population than the UK. By 2000 the difference was 91 percent.<sup>11</sup> There is a great deal of debate among scholars as to why this disparity in productivity has occurred. However, virtually all who have studied the issue agree that the relative advantage the United States had in investment in information technology over this period contributed to the disparity, at least to some degree.<sup>12</sup> Information technology power has become inextricably linked to national economic power.

In addition to the social changes caused by increased prosperity, there are the changes brought by increased interconnectivity. The world is a smaller place. Since World War II, the world has gone from FM radio and the telephone to communications satellites, global multi-media corporations, and the Internet. Globalization has created a “world community” and given a global voice to those in the most remote regions of the world. Totalitarian regimes struggle to keep information out, while media organizations with global reach try to spread their products to every corner of the globe. A detailed discussion of the social and economic impacts of the

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<sup>10</sup> Knox and Murray, *Dynamics...*, 7.

<sup>11</sup> Cambridge-MIT Institute. “UK Competitiveness, Productivity and the Knowledge Economy.” [On-line] Available from <http://web.mit.edu/cmi-videos/rowthorn/text.html>; Internet: accessed 14 September 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Susanto Basu, John G. Fernald, Nicholas Oulton, and Sylaja Srinivasan “The Case of the Missing Productivity Growth: or, Does information technology explain why productivity accelerated in the United States but not the United Kingdom?” *NBER Macroeconomics Annual* (2003): 9-63.

telecommunications revolution is beyond the scope of this monograph, but they are innumerable.<sup>13</sup>

It is interesting to note that the enemy RMA in question, the ability to attack the will of the American people through the media, is not the first RMA to result from this MR. In fact, the origin of the concept of the RMA predates Knox's and Murray's book by over a decade. The concept of revolutions in military affairs traces its roots to the Soviet examination of emerging US military capabilities in the 1970s to 80s.<sup>14</sup> Increasing use of computer technology, telecommunications, and precision-guided munitions in the US military all combined in the Soviet consciousness to constitute an alarming revolution in military affairs.<sup>15</sup> Their fears would not be realized until after the fall of the Soviet Union, in Operation Desert Storm. That success globalized the concept of an RMA, and formed the foundations of a debate over whether these capabilities were, indeed, revolutionary.

As Knox and Murray observe in *Dynamics of Military Revolution*, RMAs often spawn counter-revolutions. Military forces faced with an enemy with an asymmetric advantage sometimes generate RMAs of their own in response. Such is the premise of this monograph. The military supremacy of the US military has been matched by an enemy that is able to neutralize that supremacy by bypassing it completely. Instead, using this revolutionary capability, the enemy is able to exploit the media to attack, directly, the will of the American people to prosecute the war.

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<sup>13</sup> See Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Picador, 2007); See also Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams, *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything* (New York: Portfolio, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Jacob W. Kipp, "The Labor of Sisyphus: Forecasting the Revolution in Military Affairs during Russia's Time of Troubles," in *Toward a Revolution in Military Affairs?: Defense and Security at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Thierry Gongora and Harold von Riekhoff, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2000), 87-104.

<sup>15</sup> Jacob W. Kipp, "Confronting the RMA in Russia." *Military Review* 77, 3 (May-June 1997): 49-55.

## Literature Review

To date, works about the media in Iraq have focused on the coverage during the build-up to the war and the embedded media program during the invasion. Three prominent books contend that the American media's negligence made it complicit in drawing America into an ill-conceived war:

1. *When the Press Fails: Political Power and the News Media from Iraq to Katrina*, W. Lance Bennett, Regina G. Lawrence, and Steven Livingston (University Of Chicago Press, 2007)
2. *Now They Tell Us: The American Press and Iraq*, Michael Massing (New York Review Books, 2004)
3. *The War in Iraq and Why the Media Failed Us*, David Dudge (Praeger Publishers, 2006)

Two prominent books conclude that embedding distorted coverage of the war:

1. *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq, An Oral History*, Bill Katovsky and Timothy Carlson (Lyons Press, 2004)
2. *Media at War: The Iraqi Crisis*, Howard Tumber (Sage Publications, 2004)

The former work focuses on the experiences of embedded journalists during the initial invasion of Iraq, while the latter work focuses on the embedded media program during and immediately after the initial invasion of Iraq.

This study differs from all of these other works in that it focuses on how the enemy and the US military operate in the "media system" in Iraq,<sup>16</sup> rather than the media itself.

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<sup>16</sup> For a detailed analysis of the media system in Iraq, see the author's previous work: Patrick E. Proctor, "Defensive Operations in the Media Battlespace: Operation Iraqi Freedom" (master's thesis, US Command and General Staff College, 2006).

## Research Questions

With a firm model in place for analysis of data in this study, and an understanding of the context for the phenomenon being investigated, it is finally possible to formulate the research questions for this monograph.

Primary Question: Why has the enemy been so effective in using the media to attack the will of the American people?

In order to answer the primary question, as described earlier, this monograph will try to identify the component parts of this capability, this RMA, and try to find historical examples that can provide approaches to defeating those components. In the next section, a more thorough treatment will be given to the question of who the enemy is.

Secondary Question: What groups in Iraq employ this RMA (e.g. who is the enemy)?

Each subsequent section will address one of the secondary research questions, along with its associated tertiary questions. This monograph will examine the technology which makes this RMA possible.

Secondary Question: What are the technological requirements for this RMA?

Tertiary Question: What technology does the enemy in Iraq use to attack the will of the American people through the media?

Tertiary Question: Have analogous technological advances been seen in the past and, if so, were effective methods found to defeat them?

This monograph will then examine the US itself, to determine what characteristics make the country vulnerable to this RMA.

Secondary Question: What is the nature of an opponent against which this RMA may be applied?

Tertiary Question: What are the key features of the US that make it vulnerable to this RMA?

Tertiary Question: Why do these features exist in the US and are there feasible methods for making the US less vulnerable?

This study will finally summarize these findings and draw some conclusions in response to the primary research question.

## **The Enemy in Iraq**

There are at least a hundred different groups in Iraq, ranging from groups of less than a dozen to militias with thousands of members. Each has its own reasons for fighting US forces, its own aims, and its own methods. But not all of these exhibit the media-enabled behavior that is the topic of this study. This section will examine the most prominent illegal armed groups in Iraq. The purpose of this discussion is to identify which groups constitute “the enemy” for the remainder of this study.

### **Armed Clans**

The basic unit of organization in Iraq is the family. But, unlike in the West, family has multiple dimensions. Family includes individuals (those people who are related) but it also occupies space (the region or location which historically has been home to that family) and time (when the family occupied that region and the prominent family members of the past). This view of the family has its roots deep in the Bedouin ethos and is a defining feature of Arab culture.<sup>17</sup>

This ethos also includes a tradition of defending the family by force of arms. This often brings armed clans into conflict with one another and with the US military in Iraq. The aim of these armed clans is to defend what they feel is theirs by right. This might include territory, property, or people. But it might also include the imperative to avenge wrongs they feel have been done to them or their family. But the view of “family” in these cases sometimes confounds the Western mind. Vengeance might be demanded for wrongs that happened last week or last

century. The injured family member might be a brother of the avenger or a cousin by marriage that he has never met. Family is so interwoven into the identity of the Arab that such distinctions are minor in comparison to the imperative to defend the family's honor.<sup>18</sup>

Ultimately, the multitude of armed clans, some covering entire provinces, some filling a single house, does not share one common opinion on the presence of the US military in Iraq. Some want the Americans to leave. Some want them to stay because they are providing protection from other clans. Some want them to stay because they are restoring services. But one could not classify armed clans as employing media-enabled insurgency. Their violence is steeped in tradition and the Arab sense of justice rather than any attempt to influence the American populace.

## **Armed Gangs**

Another broad class of enemy the US military faces in Iraq is best described as armed gangs. These groups take advantage of areas of lawlessness in order to extort and steal from fellow Iraqis for profit. Theft from Iraq's difficult-to-defend oil pipeline and stealing of copper for salvage are also lucrative criminal trades in Iraq. Iraq lies along a vital smuggling route for opium leaving Afghanistan, which also provides a lucrative source of illicit income.<sup>19</sup> As the US military tries to restore the rule of law to areas of Iraq, it sometimes comes into conflict with these criminal elements.

The aim of these groups is primarily to gain material advantage and avoid justice. They thrive on a certain level of disorder. The US military seeks to restore order. Thus, these groups probably would prefer the US military leave. However, these organizations are not media-

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<sup>17</sup> Raphael Patai. *The Arab Mind: Revised Edition*. (New York: Hatherleigh Press, 2002), 78-83.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-86.

enabled. They exert power over the regions they seek to control by violence and intimidation. When they come into conflict with the US military, it is to maintain areas of control, not to influence the will of the American people to fight the war.

## **Shia Militias**

Another group in Iraq that the US military frequently finds itself at odds with is Shia militias. This descriptor broadly describes a number of groups including Jaysh al-Mahdi (the so-called Mahdi Militia) and the Badr Corps, among others. These groups are linked to charismatic Shia leaders such as Muqtada al-Sadr but are factionalized and only tenuously centrally controlled. Their goals are primarily sectarian and lead them to tactics such as murder, ethnic cleansing, and other forms of sectarian violence.<sup>20</sup>

These groups first exploded onto the scene in Iraq in August 2004 with the violent, days-long clash with the US military at an-Najaf.<sup>21</sup> After this devastating battle, their prominence began to recede and militia leaders were beginning to join the burgeoning political process. But the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra in February 2006 thrust militias back into the spotlight. Riding the crest of sectarian violence following the bombing of the Shia mosque,<sup>22</sup> militias entrenched themselves as a fact of life in Iraq.

The interrelation between these groups and leaders in the government of Iraq creates difficulties for the US military in dealing with them. These difficulties are compounded by the

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<sup>19</sup> United Nations Information Service, "Organized Crime To Be A Growing Problem In Iraq UNODC Fact- Finding Mission Reports." [On-line] available from [http://www.unodc.org/unodc/press\\_release\\_2003-08-27\\_1.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/press_release_2003-08-27_1.html); Internet: Accessed 24 February 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, "Iraq's Militia Groups." [On-line] available from [http://www.cfr.org/publication/11824/iraqs\\_militia\\_groups.html#7](http://www.cfr.org/publication/11824/iraqs_militia_groups.html#7); Internet: Accessed 25 February 2007.

<sup>21</sup> CNN, "Marines report 300 insurgents killed in Najaf." [On-line] available from <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/08/06/iraq.main/>; Internet: accessed 25 February 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Washington Post, "Bombing Shatters Mosque in Iraq." [On-line] available from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/22/AR2006022200454.html>; Internet: accessed 25 February 2007.

beneficial services they also provide in poor Shia neighborhoods, which endears them to the populace. The fractious nature of these militias also makes dealing with them a challenge. There are parts of these militias that wish to work with coalition forces and are willing to disarm when violence subsides. However, there are also other factions that are violently opposed to the presence of the US and wish to see them leave.<sup>23</sup> These are the factions that are of concern to this monograph.

It is difficult to say definitively that these factions of Shia militia are actually engaged in using violence, amplified by the media, to attack the will of the American people. Some of their actions certainly have that effect. The grizzly murders of dozens of Sunnis at a time at illegal checkpoints certainly influence both the local Sunni population and the American populace.<sup>24</sup> But a large measure of the total violence directed at the US military in Iraq does come from Shia militias. The explosively formed projectile (EFP) ambush attacks that occur against US Soldiers are perpetrated by Shia militias.<sup>25</sup> These attacks are certainly not aimed at defeating the US militarily. Regardless of what the individual executing the act believes, his attack only impacts the US military insofar as it influences US public opinion. Even if the individual militiaman does not realize it, he is engaged in media-enabled insurgency.

## **Sunni Insurgents**

The first illegally armed groups to emerge in Iraq were Sunni insurgents, the “dead-enders” as President Bush and his administration began calling them in 2003.<sup>26</sup> There are a

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<sup>23</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, “Iraq’s Militia Groups.”

<sup>24</sup> The Times, “Iraq in deeper crisis after bus hijack and wedding party attack,” [On-line] available from <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/iraq/article1086507.ece>; Internet: accessed 25 February 2007.

<sup>25</sup> CNN, “Transcript: Your World Today,” [On-line] available from <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0702/13/ywt.01.html>; Internet: accessed 25 February 2007.

<sup>26</sup> Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, “Dr. Condoleezza Rice Discusses Iraq in Chicago,” (Washington, DC: 8 October 2003).

multitude of groups, each with different grievances against the government of Iraq and the US military. Initially, their attacks were directed only at coalition forces in Iraq. But, as the insurgency has evolved, their repertoire has expanded to include dramatic terrorist-style attacks against Iraqi security force and Shia civilian targets.<sup>27</sup> These attacks are intended alternately to decrease the influence of the government of Iraq in Sunni areas and to force the withdrawal of the US military by attacking the will of the American people. This is, at least in part, media-enabled insurgency and of direct concern to this study.

The Sunni insurgency is based on a cellular structure. Greg Grant of *DefenseNews.com* has constructed an outline of Sunni insurgent operations based on interviews with numerous US military officers fighting in Iraq. He says of the Sunni's organizational structure:

The insurgents' ability to evaluate, improve and distribute new tactics is made possible by an organizational structure that allows networks to operate autonomously yet swap information. Each network concentrates its operations in a small geographic area such as a neighborhood or village, allowing each to focus on a specific American unit and quickly learn its tactics and procedures.<sup>28</sup>

This organization allows the insurgents to adapt to the US military in their area and also allows them to hide in a friendly and familiar populace, to swim like "fish in the sea" of the people, as Mao Tse-tung put it over a half century ago.<sup>29</sup>

This is not to say that there is one, centrally controlled insurgency. Nothing could be further from the truth. There are dozens of Sunni insurgent groups in Iraq. Many fight one another as much as coalition forces or the Iraqi security forces.<sup>30</sup> Rather than a single

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<sup>27</sup> Multi-National Force-Iraq, "The Insurgency," [On-line] available from [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=729&Itemid=45](http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=729&Itemid=45); Internet: accessed 25 February 2007.

<sup>28</sup> Greg Grant, "Insurgency Chess Match," [On-line] available from <http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?F=1495609&C=landwar>; Internet: accessed 25 February 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Mao Tse-tung. *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*. (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1977) vol. v, 468.

<sup>30</sup> As of the completion of this monograph (March 2008), the coalition has had a great deal of success in co-opting these insurgent groups (the so-called "Sunni awakening") and gaining their

hierarchical organization, the Sunni insurgency is a fragmented collection of parallel organizations.<sup>31</sup>

### **Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)**

This organization is the purest example of media-enabled insurgency. Their stated aim is to force the expulsion of the US military from Iraq to facilitate the establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq. (In fact, this government already exists, in “virtual” form, and issues edicts and statement in the press.)<sup>32</sup> The US military has been very successful in influencing Sunni leaders and, indirectly, Sunni insurgents, not to cooperate with this group.<sup>33</sup> Their professed association with the global al-Qaeda network has also alienated them from the surrounding Arab governments, who have also seen attacks by al-Qaeda.

This organization was initially made up mostly of foreign fighters that infiltrate into Iraq from Syria and Saudi Arabia, but it has been very efficient at co-opting Sunni extremist groups by killing their leadership.<sup>34</sup>

The organization of AQI has become very decentralized, as noted by this assessment by Colonel Peter Devlin, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) intelligence officer (G2), in an intelligence report leaked to the *Washington Post*:

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cooperation in defeating al-Qaeda in Iraq. However, these events fell outside of the delimitations in time of this monograph and is not discussed here.

<sup>31</sup> Annia Ciezadlo, “Fragmented leadership of the Iraqi insurgency,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 21 December 2004.

<sup>32</sup> CNN, “Iraq insurgent groups vow revenge for alleged rapes,” [On-line] available from <http://edition.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/meast/02/22/iraq.rape.ap/index.html>; Internet: accessed 25 February 2007.

<sup>33</sup> John Ward Anderson, “Iraqi Tribes Strike Back at Insurgents,” [On-line] available from [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/06/AR2006030601596\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/06/AR2006030601596_pf.html); Internet: accessed 25 February 2007.

<sup>34</sup> The Washington Post, “Marine Corps Assessment of Iraq Situation,” [On-line] available from [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/02/AR2007020201197.html?nav=rss\\_nation/special](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/02/AR2007020201197.html?nav=rss_nation/special); Internet: accessed 25 February 2007.

AQI is the dominant organization of influence in al-Anbar, surpassing nationalist insurgents, the Iraqi Government, and [coalition forces] in its ability to control the day-to-day life of the average Sunni. Transitioning to a primarily Iraqi organization in late 2004, AQI has become an integral part of the social fabric of western Iraq. With this ["Iraqification"] came devolution to low-level, semi-autonomous, and criminally financed cells of varying loyalty to the larger AQI organization. While this diffusion has weakened the original Salafi zeal of AQI writ [at large], it has eliminated the opportunity for a decapitating strike that would cripple the organization - this is why the death of Zarqawi had so little impact on the structure and capabilities of AQI, especially in al-Anbar.<sup>35</sup>

This group has perpetrated attacks directly aimed at the will of the American people, including the dramatic attacks on the UN compound and Red Cross in Baghdad in 2003.<sup>36</sup> But it has also conducted attacks to fan the flames of sectarian violence, perpetuating the "cycle of violence" in Iraq (including the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra).<sup>37</sup> This complex strategy indicates a deliberate effort to increase the level of perceived chaos far beyond that which they are capable of generating themselves.

Colonel Devlin goes on to describe the organizational structure of AQI.

The remaining core of AQI Salafists retain the capability to guide the organization in broad terms; they can shift resources, fund specific groups, and mass combat power for short "campaigns" by pulling in disparate cells from across western Iraq.<sup>38</sup>

There is a central authority, but its power to direct daily events is limited. Each "fiefdom" has a great deal of power over its daily affairs, while the core AQI leadership sets

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> BBC, "Baghdad terror blasts kill dozens," [On-line] available from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/3216539.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3216539.stm); Internet: accessed 25 February 2007. The presence of international organizations like the UN and ICRC lends legitimacy to the presence of American forces in Iraq. Forcing the withdrawal of these elements from Iraq, thus, reduces the legitimacy of the US presence and, indirectly, reduces American support for the war. For more detail on the impact these attacks had on American public opinion, see the author's previous work: Patrick E. Proctor, "Defensive Operations in the Media Battlespace: Operation Iraqi Freedom" (master's thesis, US Command and General Staff College, 2006).

<sup>37</sup> CNN, "Capture a 'severe blow' to al Qaeda in Iraq," [On-line] available from <http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/09/03/iraq.main/index.html>; Internet: accessed 25 February 2007.

<sup>38</sup> Washington Post, "Marine Corps."

priorities and direction for the whole organization. As the “dominant organization of influence in al-Anbar,” the Islamic State of Iraq is an illegitimate, feudal organization that perpetuates itself not to govern the people but to wage terror designed to drive the US military out of Iraq.

## **Iran and Syria**

In January 2007, a raid in the city of Irbil, in Northern Iraq, netted six Iranians operating in Iraq with false identification cards. These Iranians were from the Iranian Republican Guards Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF), a hybrid intelligence and special operations force.<sup>39</sup> Weeks later, the US announced that it had identified Jamal Jafaar Mohammed, convicted and sentenced to death in Kuwait for his role in organizing bombings of the US and French embassies, sitting as a member of the Iraqi Parliament. The US government said they had intelligence indicating that he was a key Iranian agent in Iraq.<sup>40</sup> These revelations were all part of a US campaign, started in February 2007, designed to expose the longtime involvement of Iran in the continuing violence in Iraq. Iran’s assistance facilitates Shia militias and supports Shia leaders, like firebrand cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, calling for the withdrawal of the United States from Iraq.<sup>41</sup> US military sources say that the Qods Force still has operatives in Iraq, subverting the government and training and arming Shia militias.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Multi-National Force-Iraq, U.S. Department of Defense, “Iranian Support for Lethal Activity in Iraq,” (Baghdad, Iraq: 11 February 2007).

<sup>40</sup> David Blair, “Embassy bomber given Iraq coalition seat,” [On-line] available from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/02/06/wiraqmp106.xml>; Internet: accessed 25 February 2007.

<sup>41</sup> This is only one facet of Iran’s involvement in Iraq. In addition, the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (formerly known as SCIRI), the most powerful Shia political party in Iraq, was formed in the 1980s in Iran, where its leadership took refuge during the reign of Saddam Hussein. Those who warn of an emerging Shia Crescent point to these relationships as more evidence that sect trumps ethnicity in modern Middle Eastern politics.

<sup>42</sup> Fox News, “Iran’s Leaders Arming Iraqis, US Says,” [On-line] available from <http://www.foxnews.com/wires/2007Feb11/0,4670,Iraq,00.html>; Internet: accessed 25 February 2007.

At the same time, Syria, a declared ally of Iran, is supporting Sunni insurgents by allowing foreign fighters and weapons to transit their border into Iraq. Additionally, a number of former Ba'ath Party officials and current Sunni insurgent leaders have taken refuge in Syria.<sup>43</sup> The combination of Syrian and Iranian support fans the flames of sectarian violence from both sides of the Sunni-Shia divide. This has the effect of generating the sense of unending chaos in the Western media which has had such a dramatic negative impact on the will of the American people. It is logical to conclude, based on the public statements of Iranian government and the public alliance between Syria and Iran, that this effect is deliberate.

This is an interesting “mutation” of the capability discussed in this monograph. Iran and Syria are state actors facilitating non-state actors engaged in media-enabled insurgency. They enable militias and insurgents with weapons, foreign fighters, and technical expertise from special operations/intelligence forces. The executors of the violence they enable are, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly, using that armament and training to attack the will of the American people. Iran and Syria have harnessed the power of this RMA for the advancement of national strategic objectives.

## **The Organization of the Enemy**

Based on the analysis thus far, one can broadly categorize the enemy in Iraq according to the following categories:

1. Enemy not directing violence at damaging the will of the American people. This includes armed clans and armed gangs in Iraq.
2. Enemy executing attacks intended to impact the will of the American people. This includes Shia militias, Sunni insurgents, and Al-Qaeda in Iraq.

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<sup>43</sup> Fox News, “Syria, Iran Pact Raises Eyebrows,” [On-line] available from <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,147764,00.html>; Internet: accessed 25 February 2007.

3. State actors propagating violence to impact the will of the American people to prosecute the war. This category describes Iran and Syria.

Of course, this monograph is only concerned with the last two categories. For the remainder of this study, when reference is made to “the enemy” in Iraq, reference is being made to these enemies.

## **Media Technology on the Modern Battlefield**

Neither the tactics the enemy uses nor the organization he has adopted are revolutionary. So why has media-enabled insurgency only emerged now, in the war in Iraq? The answer is technology. What are the technological requirements for this RMA? This section will attempt to identify the key technological advances that have enabled media-enabled insurgency. It will then attempt to identify analogous technological advances in history and see if methods were found to defeat them.

### **The Technology of the Media Battlespace**

What technology does the enemy in Iraq use to attack the will of the American people through the media? What technology has the latest military revolution, the telecommunications revolution, provided that did not exist before? Or, more appropriate to this monograph, what technological changes has the telecommunications revolution brought to the media?

The media itself has fundamentally changed since the Vietnam War. The virtual battlefield in which the enemy fights is a product of two significant technological innovations that emerged in the 1980s and 90s. The first innovation, the Internet, began in the 1960s as military research into moving data between computers. This research established a common data exchange format (TCP/IP). Throughout the 70s and 80s, the National Science Foundation, using these protocols, built an ever-expanding communications backbone. Initially the system connected universities in America, but as the network grew, it eventually networked universities across the globe. In the 1990s, this network collided with three other innovations: cheap

computers with uniform, easy-to-use operating systems, inexpensive telephone modems, and Web browser software. The Internet was born.<sup>44</sup> As the masses embraced this new medium, all of the technologies that now characterize the Internet, such as e-mail, Websites, chatrooms, ‘blogs, and streaming media, began to emerge.

The other technological innovation that preceded the media battlespace was the proliferation of communications satellites. In 1964, the first geosynchronous communications satellite was launched. That same year, it was used to relay the Tokyo Olympics to the United States, the first trans-Pacific television broadcast. Steadily, throughout the 1970s and 80s, about 10-20 communications satellites were launched every year.<sup>45</sup> But in 1996, the golden age of satellite communications began and a much greater volume of satellites began to be launched. Estimates indicate that as many as 600 functioning satellites are currently in orbit. (This does not include the ever-growing belt of satellites that have malfunctioned, run out of power, or otherwise out-lived their service life.) Today, nearly all television and telephone communications pass through satellites.<sup>46</sup> Along with digital video recording and the other major innovation of the telecommunications revolution, the Internet, this technological advance made satellite and cable television, including 24-hour news channels, possible.

When their effects are combined, communications satellites and the Internet provide the ether in which the media battlespace exists. Rather than focus on the individual technological innovations that have made “the media” as a battlespace possible, this section will focus on the aggregate result of these innovations: 24-hour news networks and the Internet.

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<sup>44</sup> Robert Gardner and Dennis Shortelle. *From Talking Drums to the Internet: An Encyclopedia of Communications Technology*. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1997), 147-148.

<sup>45</sup> David J. Whalen, “Communications Satellites: Making the Global Village Possible,” [On-line] available from <http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/pao/History/satcomhistory.html>; Internet: accessed 22 April 2007.

<sup>46</sup> Marco Caceres, “Orbiting satellites: Bean-counter’s heaven,” [On-line] available from <http://www.aiaa.org/aerospace/Article.cfm?issuetocid=122&ArchiveIssueID=17>; Internet: accessed 22 April 2007.

## 24-Hour News Networks

In an interview conducted by the author in 2006, John McWethy, former senior security correspondent for ABC News, discussed the difference between “big three” network news (ABC, CBS, and NBC News) and the news that appears on 24-hour news networks such as CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC. He said that the “big three” news networks have time to organize and sort stories. There are only two significant news broadcasts for “big three” networks during a normal news day, the morning news shows (such as *ABC This Morning* or the *Today Show*) and the evening news broadcasts. This means that, in most cases, these networks have between six and twelve hours to prepare each newscast. They can get reactions and “follow-ups” from key figures in the story. They can investigate and verify the accuracy of elements of the story. They can provide needed context that places the event in perspective or highlights its importance.<sup>47</sup> By the time a story appears on a “big three” network newscast, it is a complete news story.

By contrast, 24-hour news networks are under tremendous pressure to deliver video with commentary to the public as soon as they have it. Exclusive, on-the-scene footage of breaking stories is the stock and trade of 24-hour news networks. When an event happens, each media outlet is in a competition to get the video of the event on television first. The audience often sees the story as it is being made. In the chaotic first moments of a dramatic event in a war zone, on-air personalities have no choice but to speculate as to what the images might mean or indicate.<sup>48</sup> The old adage, “the first report is almost always wrong,” certainly applies here. No matter how often news personalities caveat their comments with “it isn’t clear yet,” or “this is just speculation, but...,” on-air commentary creates an impression about the event well before all of the facts are known. Frequently, this first impression becomes the prevailing perception about an

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<sup>47</sup> John McWethy, former national security correspondent, ABC News. Interview by author, 22-23 August 2006, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Oral.

event, even if it is not accurate. Efforts to correct the record later, if they are undertaken at all, are often drowned out by the next big event, covered with more dramatic video and more speculation.<sup>49</sup>

A good example of this phenomenon is a raid that occurred in March 2006 in Iraq. Iraqi special forces, accompanied by American military counterparts, conducted a raid on a Shia militia stronghold in Baghdad. A firefight ensued in which 16 Shia militiamen, armed with assault rifles and rocket propelled grenades, were killed and an Iraqi hostage was freed. Eighteen more militiamen were captured, including a senior lieutenant in Jaysh al-Mahdi. After the event was over, however, fellow militiamen brought in prayer rugs and TV cameras and claimed that the site was a mosque and the Iraqi and US Army had killed 20 worshipers at prayer.<sup>50</sup> Of course, when these charges were directed at Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) headquarters, no one was immediately prepared to comment. After all, dozens of raids occur in Iraq everyday. The response from the US military was that “it had no reports of the incident.”<sup>51</sup> Days elapsed where the response from the US military seemed schizophrenic. Two days after the incident, then-Multi-National Corps-Iraq commander Lieutenant General Chiarelli insisted that “after the fact, someone went in and made the scene look different than it was.”<sup>52</sup> General Pace, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that participants “were not aware that their target contained a

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<sup>48</sup> Jennifer Harper. “Media, blushing, takes a second look at Katrina.” *The Washington Times*, 28 September 2005.

<sup>49</sup> Project for Excellence in Journalism, “State of the News Media 2006: Cable TV,” [On-line] available from [http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.org/2006/narrative\\_cabletv\\_contentanalysis.asp?cat=2&media=6](http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.org/2006/narrative_cabletv_contentanalysis.asp?cat=2&media=6); Internet: accessed 22 April 2007.

<sup>50</sup> Oliver Poole, “Shia fury as Americans are blamed for murders at mosque,” [On-Line] available from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml;jsessionid=3VSIUTZGU1AYVQFIQMGSFGGAVCBQWIV0?xml=/news/2006/03/28/wirq28.xml>; Internet: accessed 22 April 2007.

<sup>51</sup> Alec Russell, “US soldiers accused of mosque deaths,” [On-line] available from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/03/27/wirq127.xml>; Internet: accessed 22 April 2007.

mosque until after the battle,”<sup>53</sup> contradicting the corps commander’s statement. However, at the same time this event was unfolding in the press, a story about Marines’ alleged shooting of two dozen civilians in Haditha was beginning to break.<sup>54</sup> A new feeding frenzy had begun. By the time the US military was prepared to release evidence supporting their account of the raid, no one cared to hear it.

“Feeding frenzy,” in fact, is a good way to describe coverage in the age of the 24-hour news network. Filling 24 hours every day of the year with “news” (e.g., something new) is a daunting task. It is expensive to send a news crew to any scene. Sending a news crew to Iraq is exorbitantly so. Once a journalist is at the scene, gathering facts about a story is also expensive (again, even more so in a war zone). Thus, cable news networks have largely settled on substituting repetition for content. A study by the Project for Excellence in Journalism found that, on an average news day, 7 out of every 10 news stories shown in an hour on cable news are repeated stories. Of those, only 1 in 10 contains new content.<sup>55</sup> With the larger number of stories that a 24-hour cable news channel must cover, they are forced to substitute breadth for depth. That is, they cover more stories, but not as deeply. The same study found 58 percent of news stories on cable news channels contained none or only one out of ten possible elements to make a complete news story (as compared to “big three” network’s news with only 47 percent and newspapers with no stories containing this few elements). The same study also found that cable news channels thrive on immediacy. This drives breadth: the drive to continuously deliver new

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<sup>52</sup> Andrew North, “US-Iraqi row over ‘mosque massacre,’” [On-line] available from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/4854450.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4854450.stm); Internet: accessed 22 April 2007.

<sup>53</sup> Francis Harris, “US admits attack target contained a mosque,” [On-line] available from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/03/29/wirq29.xml&sSheet=/news/2006/03/29/ixnewstop.html>; Internet: accessed 22 April 2007.

<sup>54</sup> Josh White and Sonya Geis, “4 Marines Charged In Haditha Killings,” [On-line] available from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/21/AR2006122100124.html>; Internet: accessed 22 April 2007.

<sup>55</sup> Project for Excellence in Journalism.

stories. But it also drives the strange phenomenon in which anchors are forced to sustain a sense of urgency about old stories without new information.<sup>56</sup> The result of these converging forces on 24-hour news is that once an inaccurate or misleading story is aired, it will be aired repeatedly, with little depth and little new information, until it is pushed off by the next new story.

The Western world is not alone in suffering this phenomenon. A flood of new, satellite-based news stations have appeared across the Middle East as well. Al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya are just the best known of these stations. Dozens of others, like the Iranian-supported al-Alam and the Syrian-supported al-Zawraa, have begun broadcasting in Iraq and across the Muslim world. The US government even supports a station, al-Hurra,<sup>57</sup> which competes in this market. The style of the content on all of these channels would be immediately familiar to any viewer of Western 24-hour cable news channels. The significant distinction would be in the nature of the content. These stations are not nearly as reluctant to show gore as their Western counterparts. Consider this account of coverage of one news event.

When a U.S. military helicopter swooped into Baghdad and began spraying bullets into a crowd of civilians believed to be looting an Army armored vehicle, most Arab news channels aired a video of the scene that captured the last words of a journalist killed in the attack.

“Please help me. I am dying,” pleaded the reporter, Mazin Tumaisi. His network, al-Arabiya, showed the footage again and again, as did al-Jazeera.<sup>58</sup>

This highlights another feature of 24-hour news--they have constituencies to which they respond. Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC compete for the American audience. CNN international, al-Jazeera English, and BBC World compete for the English-speaking international audience. Al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya compete for the Arab-speaking world. Media, to a large degree, caters to

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<sup>56</sup> Project for Excellence in Journalism.

<sup>57</sup> Online News Hour, “A New Voice,” [On-line], available from [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/jan-june04/voice\\_04-15.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/jan-june04/voice_04-15.html); Internet: accessed 22 April 2007.

<sup>58</sup> Ellen McCarthy, “Va.-Based, U.S.-Financed Arabic Channel Finds Its Voice,” *Washington Post* (15 October 2004), A01.

the confirmation bias of its audience. Media consumers vote with their remotes. 24-hour news audiences want to be challenged, but they want to be challenged within their preconceived notions. Audiences come to the news with their prejudices and cultural biases. To win an audience, a news channel must conform to those beliefs. Why is this important? It is important because material from pan-Arab press migrates to American media outlets. For instance, in the battle now known as “Fallujah I” in April 2004, al-Jazeera cameras captured the scenes of “civilians” being taken into the hospitals. Because no Western cameras were in the city, these images served to frame a narrative of excessive civilian casualties in Western news coverage of the battle.<sup>59</sup> The bias and perceptions of the pan-Arab audience, at least indirectly, have an impact on the images that reach the American public about the war in Iraq.

## The Internet

The Internet facilitates the enemy in Iraq in many ways. E-mail, Internet chat rooms, instant messaging, and Websites facilitate command and control and recruiting. But this monograph is concerned with how the enemy uses the Internet to facilitate media-enabled insurgency. The two ways in which the enemy uses the Internet to conduct media warfare are as a means to disseminate PSYOP products and to magnify their importance.

The Internet is a primary vector for enemy videos. Among the most famous examples is the Nick Berg beheading. The video originally appeared on the insurgent Website, *Muntada al-Ansar*,<sup>60</sup> but the content was so explosive that it was inevitable that it would find its way into Western media (at least in still frame). This is only the most prominent example of pictures and videos generated by the enemy moving into the media in this way. A steady stream of hostage videos, beheadings, IED attacks, and other videos and pictures have entered the Western media

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<sup>59</sup> Bing West. *No True Glory*, (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 2005), 89-94.

by first being posted on the Internet. In fact, this has become the primary method for the enemy to deliver products into the media battlespace.

Another way in which the enemy uses the Internet is to magnify its importance. A good example of this is the so-called “Islamic State of Iraq,” the notional shadow government of al-Qaeda in Iraq. They purport to control all of Western and central Iraq, including Baghdad. However, as of January 2007, al-Qaeda in Iraq in reality had only tenuous control of al-Anbar province. This does not stop them from proclaiming themselves the legitimate government of Iraq on al-Qaeda-aligned Websites. It remains to be seen whether this effort will gain traction with the pan-Arab audience at which it is directed, but it certainly magnifies the importance of the organization in the Western media.

The Islamic State of Iraq is only the best-known example of this activity. Nearly every insurgent or militia group in Iraq has a Website. The Web is the great equalizer. Just as the Internet can give a Web-based business like Amazon as much legitimacy as a “brick-and-mortar” business like Waldenbooks, the Internet can give insurgent groups with as few as a dozen people as much credibility as larger insurgent groups like Ansar al-Sunna and al-Qaeda in Iraq. A single dramatic attack, filmed and put on an insurgent group’s Website is their ticket to the “major league” of media-enabled insurgency.

One might wonder why the US military is not more active in attacking these enemy Websites. After all, if a teenager can shut down Google for a half a day,<sup>61</sup> why can’t the most powerful military on Earth take down a Website run by a dozen thugs in Iraq? The answer has a great deal to do with the nature of the US military and the nation it serves, and will be discussed in much greater detail in the next section. For the remainder of this discussion, it is enough to say

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<sup>60</sup> CNN. “Arabic papers play down beheading,” [On-line] available from <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/05/12/iraq.berg.arabreax/index.html>; Internet: accessed 7 September 2006.

<sup>61</sup> Richard Shim and Michael Kanellos, “Google, other engines hit by worm variant,” [On-line] available from [http://news.com.com/2100-1023\\_3-5283750.html](http://news.com.com/2100-1023_3-5283750.html); Internet: accessed 22 April 2007.

that, currently, the US military is not attacking insurgent Websites and the enemy has complete freedom of action on the Internet.

## Mass Distribution of Visual Information

What is new about this technology? Why have 24-hour news and the Internet fundamentally changed the way the American public sees the war in Iraq as opposed to other wars in history? The answer is pictures. These technologies have most profoundly impacted the transmission of visual information--images and video. Between cable news and the Internet, the amount of visual information about the war that is accessible to the average American has exploded in comparison to other wars. One need only consider the defining visual images of the twentieth century's wars to understand how important this is: the raising of the flag over Iwo Jima, frozen American soldiers leaving the Chosin reservoir, Colonel Nguyen Ngoc Loan executing a man in a Saigon street., a naked and screaming Vietnamese child fleeing a napalm attack, the helicopter lifting off from the roof of the US embassy in Saigon. These images evoke emotions that form the narrative of those wars as powerfully as their historical facts. And these images came through a soda straw: a few national newspapers and news reels or, later, the "big three" networks' twice-daily news broadcasts. Now, in the wake of the telecommunications revolution, the average American is flooded with images of the war. If he is not sated by the "big three" networks, he can go to the four major American 24-hour news networks. If those do not give him enough visual information, he can go to BBC World or al-Jazeera English. If these do not satisfy him, he can go to the hundreds of "mainstream" news Websites of varying size and flavor. Then there are the other Websites, offering a political slant or point of view to agree with any consumer. And for the truly ravenous, there are the "underground" Websites that serve up a steady stream of video and images of dead bodies, grizzly murders, beheadings, and bombings. Rather than a few memorable photos shared by the entire country, today's American is barraged with thousands of images and videos; each American chooses his own most poignant.

Why does it matter? Images are not just information. Images, still or video, are emotional. They say almost nothing about their circumstance but appeal directly to the humanity of the viewer. Take, for example, the case of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal. News of the investigation against the individuals was announced in press releases in January 2004 with no reaction from the media.<sup>62</sup> But, when the pictures emerged in April and the American public was faced with images of American soldiers mistreating prisoners, the story erupted into an international furor.<sup>63</sup> If there are indelible images of the Iraq war, among them will almost certainly be the picture of Lynndie England with a pyramid of naked Iraqis.

## **A Brief History of the Images of War**

Throughout history, power of pictures to sway the masses has compelled governments to try to control them. Two basic approaches have been used to limit the impact of visual information on populations. The first method is to limit the access of the population to gathered and disseminated visual information. The second is to limit the collection or production of visual information.

### **Limiting Dissemination or Receipt**

As societies have liberalized, it has become increasingly difficult to limit the access people have to visual information. This has been made even more difficult by the flood of visual information created by the telecommunications revolution. Still, there are several modern examples of government efforts that have successfully blocked the access of their populations to

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<sup>62</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Central Command, Release Number: 04-01-43, *Detainee Treatment Investigation*. (Tampa, FL, 16 January 2004).

<sup>63</sup> Seymour Hersh, *Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib*. (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2004), 20-46.

visual information at the point of receipt (as opposed to blocking it at the point of collection, production, or delivery).

During “the Troubles” in Northern Ireland, the British government exercised censorship of media reports leaving Ireland. Under Margaret Thatcher, the government enacted laws prohibiting certain images from being broadcast on British television, including images of fighting on the island, programs about the war, and speeches from Irish Republican Army (IRA) leaders. British television was able to circumvent some of these restrictions by having actors reenact speeches and interviews with IRA leaders.<sup>64</sup> But censorship was successful in stopping images of violence from being transmitted in the country.

The applicability of this example after the advent of the Internet and satellite television is questionable. The global, omnipresent nature of media today makes it very difficult to prevent visual information from being received inside a country’s borders. It is the very nature of the telecommunications revolution that it vastly increases the access of people to information, visual or otherwise. Satellite television and the Internet would have continued to carry prohibited images into the UK despite the laws of that day. Any legislation to block these free-flowing streams of visual information would have been practically unenforceable.

China, on the other hand, has been successful in limiting access to visual information in the telecommunications age. A Harvard Law study conducted in 2002 found that China had the most extensive Internet restrictions of any nation in the world. Chinese Internet service providers (ISPs) are forced to limit access to certain objectionable Websites inside the country. Unregistered Internet cafés are closed. Because China is such a large market, its government is able to put demands on international Internet companies such as Google, forcing them to restrict

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<sup>64</sup> Phillip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda in the 20th Century: Selling Democracy*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 250.

the access they give Chinese customers to visual information (received via the “images” and “video” search features and e-mail service that the company provides).<sup>65</sup>

Again, applicability to the current problem is suspect. Chinese society lacks a tradition of individual liberties common to countries in the West. The American public would probably not stand for such restrictions on its Internet access. Even if it would, the US has a vast number of unregulated Internet service providers. Additionally, a much larger percentage of Internet users in the US are connected in their homes (as opposed to China, where most users connect via Internet cafés). Such restrictions would be nearly impossible to enforce in the United States, even if the American people would consent to them.

A final example of defeating visual information technology by restricting dissemination occurred in Algeria in 1999. Al-Jazeera, an Arab-language satellite network based in Qatar, was set to air a debate between parties in the Algerian Civil War. The Algerian government appealed repeatedly to the Qatari government to have the broadcasts stopped. When these appeals were unsuccessful, the Algerian government was left with no other options. They cut power to several cities, including the capital city of Algiers, for the one-hour duration of the broadcast to prevent it from being seen.<sup>66</sup>

At least metaphorically, this illustrates the difficulty of preventing visual information from being disseminated in the wake of the telecommunications revolution--the only reliable method is to completely “unplug.” These examples, while successful, all share two things in common. First, these methods all reflect a sense of desperation, the only option left to the government in question. Second, none of them is really feasible with today’s technology in a liberal democracy.

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<sup>65</sup> Scott W. Morton, *China: Its History and Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill Professional, 2005), 245.

<sup>66</sup> John R. Bradley, “Will Al-Jazeera Bend?” *Prospect Magazine* (UK) 97 (April 2004).

## Limiting Generation of Visual Information

There have been five great waves of advance in technology that have brought corresponding increases in quality and volume of visual information to the masses. Each was harnessed for communications about current events and dramatically changed the way people saw their world. The first advance was the printing press, which brought reproducible printing of images. Next, was the nexus of high-speed newspaper printing and a new technology which allowed newspapers to publish photographs. Then came motion pictures, which were soon followed by newsreels. Later, television brought footage of news events into people's homes. Finally, telecommunications brought the 24-hour news channel and Internet delivery of images and video. Each of these advances brought a greater, more visceral level of visual information to audiences. And, when wars occurred in the wake of each of these technological advances, the authorities of that age sought to control the technology.

Movable type face and the proliferation of the printing press had a dramatic impact on Western society, beginning with Martin Luther's 95 Theses. The social revolution that followed was in part fueled by visual images, mass-produced on the same printing presses. Hand-carved drawings of all manner of political cartoons, from the pope caricatured as the whore of Babylon to Luther as the seven-headed beast,<sup>67</sup> became history's first mass-produced psychological operations (PSYOP) products, rallying populations to each side of the conflict.

Close control of printers was the primary means of counterpropaganda in this conflict. After the peasant revolt was put down in 1525, the clergy exercised much greater control over printers. Decrees from the clergy and their loyal sovereigns barred the production of anti-clergy images. Close supervision of printers ensured compliance.<sup>68</sup> Because of the size and complexity

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<sup>67</sup> John Dillenberger, *Images and Relics: Theological Perceptions and Visual Images in Sixteenth-century Europe*, (New York: Oxford University Press--US, 1999), 17.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

of the printing and image stamping equipment, and because of the relatively high skill required to work as a printer, it was easy for authorities to control the printers and the locations where printing occurred.

Printing technology remained basically unchanged until the industrial revolution brought the steam-powered, double-sided roller press. Finally, the mass production of newspapers was possible. In 1814, *The Times* in London was flooding England at the rate of 1,400 pages per hour. Three decades later, printing presses were publishing millions of pages per day.<sup>69</sup> However, pictures in newspapers continued to be made from crude wood carving through the end of the American Civil War. It would take several more years before this technology was replaced by lithography, which allowed higher quality drawings and later even tracings of photos to be included in newspapers.<sup>70</sup>

The publishing of photographs in newspapers began in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, but was not commonplace until the turn of the century.<sup>71</sup> It is a testament to the visceral, emotional nature of photographs that heavy censorship occurred throughout the Great War on all sides. No such censorship had occurred, for instance, in the Civil War, when the volume of newspapers was equally prolific, but printing of photos was not yet possible. Militaries were able to exercise absolute control over photographers on the battlefield because (a) the size of photographic equipment at the time made covert photography impossible and (b) delivery of pictures to newspapers required their physical movement off of the battlefield,. Journalists had no choice but to submit to the restrictions and allow the review of their photos by censors.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Robert Gardner and Dennis Shortelle. *From Talking Drums to the Internet: An Encyclopedia of Communications Technology*. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1997), 224.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 214-215

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> John Phillips Resch, *Americans At War: Society, Culture, and the Homefront*, vol 3, (Detroit: Gale Group, 2005), 141-142

Another technology, motion pictures, had also arrived on the scene at the turn of the century. However, during World War I, it was still too unwieldy and immature a technology to be feasibly transported to the battlefield. It was not until World War II that movie cameras were brought to war. Again, world militaries sought to censor the new, more graphic technology. Meanwhile, restrictions were eased on the old technology, photography. Only a few years into the war, the first picture of three dead bodies, laying on a beach in New Guinea, appeared in American newspapers.<sup>73</sup>

Part of the reason motion pictures were more tightly controlled than stills was because they produced more graphic images. However, photographic technology had also become more difficult to control. Cameras were smaller and lighter. More importantly, pictures no longer needed to be physically carried away from the battlefield. The first pictures were “wired” by the Associated Press in 1935. By the beginning of US involvement in World War II, the wiring of photos was possible from Hawaii and London. By war’s end, the wiring technology had spread to every corner of the war.<sup>74</sup> The capability became so omnipresent that it became impossible to feasibly control the flow of pictures off the battlefield.

Motion pictures, by contrast, were much easier to control. The equipment was unwieldy and footage had to be moved physically, usually by military, means off the battlefield. All military forces in World War II were able to tightly censor and control movie footage and the associated text that would make up newsreels of events during the war. In the US, for instance, major Hollywood studios formed a partnership with the US Government’s Office of War Information (OWI) Bureau of Motion Pictures (BMP) and willingly submitted their work to

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<sup>73</sup> Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 268-270.

<sup>74</sup> National Press Photographers Association, “September Services Planned For NPPA Life Member Joseph J. Rosenthal, 94,” [On-line] available from [http://www.nppa.org/news\\_and\\_events/news/2006/08/rosenthal.html](http://www.nppa.org/news_and_events/news/2006/08/rosenthal.html); Internet: accessed 24 April 2007.

ensorship by the government. The OWI even dictated themes for movies and newsreels, though the application of such efforts was uneven and inconsistent throughout the war.<sup>75</sup> Hollywood wasn't submitting out of patriotism; motion picture technology of the day required that movie producers cooperate with the military.

By the Vietnam War, however, the US military had lost control of motion pictures as well. The television had revolutionized the way Americans were informed and entertained. Movie cameras were smaller and lighter. Advances in civilian aircraft made worldwide civilian air freight a reality. Finally, the nature of the Vietnam War itself made it impossible for the US military to control access to the battlefield.

Television journalist typically covered the Vietnam War by travelling in a two-man team, reporter and cameraman. Because of the nightly requirement for footage to fill the "big three" networks' evening newscasts and because the war was taking place in a much smaller area than had World War II, Vietnam was flooded with reporters. There were so many, in fact, that it was impossible for the US military to control or even monitor their movements. This war was still captured on film, but the 16mm camera was much smaller and lighter than its World War II counterpart.<sup>76</sup> The reporter could carry the smaller film off the battlefield himself and ship it as a parcel by civilian airmail to Los Angeles. From there, it was processed into video for broadcast; the whole process often took only three days.<sup>77</sup> Since technology no longer permitted tight control of news coverage of the war, the US military didn't try. Press credentials directed "full cooperation and assistance" with the journalist holding the card; journalists were given

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<sup>75</sup> Martin H. Folly, *The United States and World War II: The Awakening Giant*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), 51-56.

<sup>76</sup> TGF Transfer, "The Incomparable B&H Filmo," [On-line] available from <http://www.tfgtransfer.com/filmo.htm>; Internet: accessed 25 April 07.

<sup>77</sup> Online NewsHour, "Covering the War--April 20 2000," [On-line] available from [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/jan-june00/vietnam\\_4-20.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/jan-june00/vietnam_4-20.html); Internet: accessed 25 April 2007.

unrestricted access to the battlefield as long as they did not violate operations security (OPSEC) rules.<sup>78</sup> The war was covered without restriction, shown in American living rooms nightly.

In the wake of telecommunications revolution, video of war became even less controllable. However, the nature of the conflicts the US faced in the 80s initially masked this inability to control visual image transmission. Because of the sudden and short nature of the fights in Grenada and Panama, press was only able to gain access to the battlefield through the tight control of the military. In Grenada, the press was barred from the battlefield for the first 48 hours and fed US military footage of the entire war.<sup>79</sup> Even the first Gulf War was tightly controlled. Because of the vast distances, and the remote location of military units in Saudi Arabia during Desert Shield, reporters were forced to rely on military transportation. Once the air war started, reporters had to rely on gun camera footage. With the beginning of the ground war, forces moved so far, so fast, that the press was unable to keep pace with forces in the field except by military-sponsored helo-junket. The ground war was over before the media could reach the front.<sup>80</sup> The physical conditions and speed of all of these conflicts allowed the military to control video leaving the operational area by providing selective facilitation to the media.

Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo should have been harbingers of things to come for the US military. The power of visual images was changing the face of war. In Somalia, videos and pictures of Rangers drug through the streets of Mogadishu and Somalis dancing on downed helicopters forced a change to US policy and the eventual withdrawal of the US military from the country.<sup>81</sup> In both Bosnia and Kosovo, journalists with freedom of access, modern, satellite-

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<sup>78</sup> Spencer Tucker, *Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War: A Political, Social, and Military History*, (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 1998) 675.

<sup>79</sup> Jacqueline E. Sharkey, "American Journalism Review--Airing Graphic Footage," [On-Line] available from <http://www.ajr.org/article.asp?id=2989>; Internet: accessed 25 April 2007.

<sup>80</sup> Alexander DeConde, Richard Dean Burns, Fredrik Logevall. *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*. (New York: Scribner, Gale Group, 2002), 547-558.

<sup>81</sup> Sharkey, "Graphic Footage."

based video equipment, and 24-hour news networks as platforms were able to draw the US into a conflict. Pictures of gaunt Bosnian prisoners in concentration camps and later Kosovar Albanians being driven from their homes into refugee camps moved the public to demand action from their government.<sup>82</sup>

An examination of the history of government attempts to control visual information illustrates two points. First, when trying to control the collection or production of information, physical control is required. This physical control can come from limitations of the technology (such as the size of equipment or challenges in moving material off the battlefield) or from limitations imposed by the nature of the battlefield (as in Grenada, Panama, and Desert Storm). But if these factors do not exist, controlling the production of visual information is impossible.

Second, controlling the dissemination and receipt of visual information requires onerous government intervention. The American people chafe against restrictions on the dissemination of information even when they agree with the cause that precipitates it (as in World War II). The public has outright rejected censorship of images from the war in Iraq. The next section will explore the reasons why.

## **Why Is America Vulnerable?**

The model for an RMA presented by Knox and Murray in *Dynamics of Military Revolution: 1300-2050* forms the basis of this monograph. However, it does not include the nature of the enemy against which an RMA is directed as a key element of the RMA. When a force embarks upon an RMA, it does not have control over the enemy against which it will be directed. However, it obviously develops the RMA with a type of opponent in mind. An RMA breaks down when it is applied to an enemy too dramatically different from that for which it is designed.

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<sup>82</sup> DeConde, *American Foreign Policy*, 559.

What is the nature of an opponent against which this RMA may be applied? More specifically, what are the key features of the US that make it vulnerable to this RMA? Why do these features exist in the US and are there feasible methods for making the US less vulnerable?

Media-enabled insurgency, as an RMA, is designed for application against the United States, its military and its people. What are the essential elements of the US which make it vulnerable to this RMA? Why does the nation exhibit these characteristics? Are there feasible ways to “harden” the US and its nature to make it less vulnerable to this RMA? This section will explore the characteristics of the US and its military which make them susceptible to this RMA and how these vulnerabilities manifest themselves in the war in Iraq. It will then look for conditions in history under which these vulnerabilities have been successfully mitigated. Finally, this section will briefly examine the feasibility of recreating these conditions in the current war.

### **“Free Security”**

John L. Gaddis, in his book, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience*, recounts the observation of C. Vann Woodward that, in addition to the tradition of “free land” (a vast unexplored area of the West which allowed the unimpeded American expansion from Atlantic to Pacific) Americans were also shaped by the tradition of “free security.” For a significant portion of US history, after the end of the War of 1812, American security was in large measure guaranteed by its geographic location. As a result, it was able to expand and grow without the constant threat of invasion most other nations face. Gaddis identifies the sense of “free security” as the reason America reacts so dramatically to strategic shocks, “surprises” such as the Pearl Harbor and 9/11.<sup>83</sup> It is the desire to return to this sense of “free security” that drives the nation’s response to attack.

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<sup>83</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 7-10.

However, as Gaddis points out in passing, the nature of the attack on 11 September 2001 made it impossible for the US to mobilize as it had for World War I and II. Because the attacks on New York and Washington were terrorist attacks, a necessary component of recovery was to urge Americans to remain vigilant but go about their normal lives.<sup>84</sup> There would be no conscription. There would be no rationing. There would be no war bonds. The US military would fight two wars simultaneously, a half-a-world away while the American people went about their days as usual.

This separation between the American people and their military was not a creation of 9/11. This was simply a continuation of a semi-deliberate trend which had begun at the end of World War II. American security policy in the Cold War required that the President have the flexibility to employ the military without “drumming up” popular support or getting a declaration of war. A detailed discussion of this trend is beyond the scope of this monograph, but significant milestones in this journey include the War Powers Act, the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, the abolition of the draft and the rise of the all-volunteer force, and the precedents set by interventions in Grenada, Panama, Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. For three generations before 9/11, the passion of the people has been progressively removed from the security policy equation.

However, most American wars are characterized by a pattern of mobilization followed by post-war demobilization. Both North and South mobilized to fight the American Civil War. But America demobilized just as rapidly and was forced to prosecute national security policy “on the cheap:” Indian Wars in the west, punitive campaigns on the Southern border, interventions across the Western Hemisphere, and most notably the Spanish-American War. World War I brought a massive mobilization followed by yet another precipitous drawdown of military capability. The Army and Marine Corps were forced to contend with a host of issues in Central and South

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 37.

America with limited active forces. Repeatedly in American history, America builds up to respond to strategic shocks and then is quick to return to the illusion of “free security.”

But now, America is faced with the challenge of fighting a big war without mobilizing. The US government lacks all of the benefits mobilization has historically brought. Not only is the US without the vast military that conscription would provide; it is also without the mandate which, in the past, has allowed the American government to impose restrictions on freedom of the press and speech. Even more importantly, the lack of mobilization has denied the government a nation at war. Americans are still in the “free security” mindset. They do not see the wars being fought in the Middle East as a mortal threat to their nation or their way of life. As Victor Davis Hanson noted, “America believes that the entire region is not worth the bones of a single Marine.”<sup>85</sup>

## **Free Press**

A free, independent press is a pillar of the American political process. As the nation’s founders envisioned, the fourth estate serves as a check on the power of the government. As the previous section highlighted, there are technological reasons why it has become increasingly difficult for the government to impose restrictions on the media. But there are important cultural reasons as well. The default condition of the American press is to be completely unfettered. The previous section also highlighted instances where, in times of war, the US government successfully placed restrictions on the press and its coverage of conflict. But the absence of a mobilized society, an American public operating under the illusion of “free security,” means no such restrictions would be tolerated.

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<sup>85</sup> Victor David Hanson, “Iraq, and the Truth We Dare Not Speak,” [On-Line] available from <http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=MTljYjgzNmRjOWY4ZjljZDJhODcxODhkNjhjZTExMTU=>; Internet: accessed 6 May 2007.

This limitation effects the battlefield in Iraq in several profound ways. Most obviously, it allows media outlets in Iraq to cover any aspect of the war they wish, in any way they wish. But it also has more subtle impacts that indirectly but dramatically impact the way the war is fought and the way it is perceived by the American public. Consider how adversary media (independent or enemy-sponsored Arab-language media which caters to the enemy's constituency) is treated in Iraq. Because the principle of a free press is so fundamental in American culture, in the minds of Americans it extends even to adversary media outlets. When news broke that the Bush administration was pressuring Doha over the political leanings of al-Jazeera in January 2005, an angry Michael Botein, professor and director of the Media Center at New York Law School, wrote in the *New York Times*:

The administration's pressure to shut down Al Jazeera, the leading Arabic television satellite station, is an embarrassment. It comes while the president boasts that United States-supported broadcasters -- such as Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty and Radio Martí -- aid his "democracy" goals. Broadcasters cannot be subsidized in the United States and banned in allied countries.<sup>86</sup>

Media outlets and politicians decry any US government interference with any press, anywhere in the world. This even extends to using media to influence the populace inside the operational area. In 2005, the *Los Angeles Times* reported on a secret program run by the Lincoln Group for the US military. The contractor reportedly employed Arab linguists to write articles for Iraqi newspapers and paid the newspapers to run them without attributing the source to either Lincoln Group or the US military. Political leaders and the media pounced on the allegations. Massachusetts Senator, Edward M. Kennedy, said that the program "speaks volumes about the president's credibility gap. If Americans were truly welcomed in Iraq as liberators, we wouldn't have to doctor the news for the Iraqi people."<sup>87</sup> Lynne Duke's *Washington Post* article on the

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<sup>86</sup> Michael Botein, "Pressure on Al Jazeera," *New York Times*, 6 February 2005.

<sup>87</sup> Associated Press, "Pentagon quizzed on Iraq propaganda program," [On-line] available from <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/10272171/>; Internet: accessed 6 May 2007.

program had the subheading, “Propaganda? Nah, Here's the Scoop, Say the Guys Who Planted Stories in Iraqi Papers.” The article goes on to say of the program:

Bombs are blasting in Baghdad. War fills the air there and fills the airwaves here. But a more quiet war -- the information war -- is waged by stealth, in the words and images deployed by pundits, partisans, policymakers, propagandists, psychological operators and influence specialists, both civilian and military.<sup>88</sup>

The American people reject the interference of their government in the media, any media, even inside a war zone.

Because the US government lacks the mandate provided by national mobilization, it lacks the ability to impose any restrictions on the media. (As the previous section noted, imposing such restrictions might be impossible anyway, given the technology provided by the telecommunications revolution.) It even lacks the ability to influence foreign media covertly without public outrage. In the absence of restriction or influence, the media is only limited by security and the amount of money it is willing to spend to cover the war. The money it is able to spend is, in turn, dictated by public interest about the war, communicated to the media in terms of readership and ratings. Public interest, in turn, is dictated by what the media chooses to cover about the war. As a result, the media serves up what they think the American people want to see: car bombs and American soldiers engaged in combat. The narrative for the war in Iraq is driven primarily by the desire of media outlets to get the “biggest bang for the buck,” to attract the largest audience possible while keeping costs as low as possible.<sup>89</sup>

## **Free Speech**

At the heart of a free press is the principle of freedom of speech, guaranteed by the First Amendment to the US Constitution. The “public square,” the forum for the public expression of

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<sup>88</sup> Lynne Duke, “The Word at War,” *Washington Post*, 26 March 2006.

ideas, in the age of the telecommunications revolution is the Internet. Via Websites and ‘blogs, all voices become equal in the media battlespace. The only price of admission is the cost to connect to the Internet. As the previous section highlighted, enemy groups in Iraq have used this medium to distribute their visual images and establish their credibility as competitors for Iraq’s future.

The US military, by contrast, has done very little to engage in this forum. According to Frank Cilluffo, director of the Homeland Security Policy Institute at George Washington University, “There is only one side on the [Internet] battlefield, and it isn’t us.” A report released by the institute in May of 2007 indicates that the enemy has complete freedom of action on the Internet and the US government and military is not engaging them in this medium.<sup>90</sup> Why is the enemy even able to have a presence on the Internet at all? After all, US military research created the Internet. Surely the military has the ability to take down enemy Websites.

The military term for attacking enemy Internet Websites is computer network attack (CNA). JP 3-13, *Information Operations*, defines CNA as follows:

Actions taken through the use of computer networks to disrupt, deny, degrade, or destroy information resident in computers and computer networks, or the computers and networks themselves.<sup>91</sup>

The fact that the definition and doctrine exists is at least circumstantial evidence that the capability exists. The *Operational Law Handbook* adds, “Equipment necessary for CNA is readily available and inexpensive, and access to many computer systems can be obtained through the Internet.” It then goes on to indicate that the “lead” for computer network operations is US

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<sup>89</sup> The arrival of GEN Petraeus in Iraq and the perceived success of the so-called “surge” has had a dramatic effect on news coverage of the war. However, these events fall outside of the time delimitations of this monograph and will not be discussed here.

<sup>90</sup> Mimi Hall, “Terrorists Not Countered On Web,” *USA Today*, 3 May 2007, 1.

<sup>91</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Headquarters Department of Defense. JP 3-13, *Information Operations*, (Washington, DC, 13 February 2006), GL-5.

Strategic Command (STRATCOM).<sup>92</sup> It seems likely that the US military has the capability to attack enemy Websites. If this is the case, why doesn't it simply shut down the enemy in this region of the media battlespace?

One can make a relatively educated guess about why such activity does not occur simply based on the headlines. The simple answer is that the enemy is using US laws against the US military by placing their Websites on servers in America. For instance, Jay Lyman of NewsFactor.com found that a site, PalestineInfo.com, which purports to speak for *Hamas* and glorifies their suicide bombing activities, is hosted by a company called OMS with servers in Connecticut and Chicago.<sup>93</sup> According to James Kirkhope, director of the Terrorism Research Center in Washington, al-Qaeda is using servers in the US as well. He says this is a common practice with terrorist groups and their sites can only be shut down if they violate privacy laws or collect money on behalf of an organization declared a terrorist organization. The government is powerless to shut down sites that simply promote al-Qaeda or show images or video of terrorist acts.<sup>94</sup> The enemy is using the basic freedom afforded to every American, the right of free speech, to attack the will of the American people to prosecute the war in Iraq.

If the US military cannot engage and disrupt enemy Websites, why doesn't it compete with the enemy by using the Internet to influence foreign populaces just as the enemy does? Again, the answer lies in the nature of the American people and their jealous defense of the freedom of speech. Just as a cultural aversion exists in America to the government influencing the media, a cultural aversion exists to the government influencing the people themselves. In the

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<sup>92</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School. *Operational Law Handbook*, (Charlottesville, VA, August 2006), 423, 426.

<sup>93</sup> Jay Lyman, "Investigative Report: Terrorist Web Site Hosted by U.S. Firm," [On-line] available from <http://www.newsfactor.com/perl/story/17079.html>; Internet: accessed 6 May 2007.

<sup>94</sup> Mark Baker, "World: Tracing, Closing Terrorist Websites Not As Simple As It Sounds," [On-line] available from <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2004/07/5b9934fa-1eab-461e-bc42-1607d00976f6.html>; Internet: accessed 6 May 2007.

last century, this aversion has manifested itself in a body of laws in part inspired by the American censorship and propaganda experience in World War II. In 1948, Congress passed the Smith-Mundt Act which inaugurated the US Information Agency (USIA) and the concept of public diplomacy (promoting the US and its ideals abroad).<sup>95</sup> This act included explicit provisions to prevent public diplomacy products from being disseminated in the United States. These prohibitions were strengthened in the Foreign Relations Act of 1972. The Zorinsky amendment to this act also prohibited any federal funding of government efforts to influence the American people.<sup>96</sup> It is this body of laws that guided the deep doctrinal separation between psychological operations (PSYOP) and public affairs.

This sensitivity also prevents the US military from engaging the enemy's constituent population on the Internet. As Major Angela Maria Lungu, primary author of FM 3-05.30, *Psychological Operations* observed in September 2001, "The major arguments against Internet PSYOP concern isolation of target audiences, namely preventing Americans from receiving Internet products."<sup>97</sup> It is the fear of PSYOP products traveling through the borderless realm of the Internet and seeping into US public discourse that prevents the US military from engaging in the war of ideas on the Internet. To understand just how restrictive this prohibition is, consider the definition of psychological operations from the JP 3-53, *Joint Doctrine for Psychological Operations*,

Psychological operations: Planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations,

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<sup>95</sup> For a detailed discussion of the USIA, its formation, and its intent, see Wilson P Dizard Jr., *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2004).

<sup>96</sup> Angela Maria Lungu, "War.com: The Internet and Psychological Operations," *Joint Force Quarterly*, 28 (Spring/Summer 2001): 13-17.

<sup>97</sup> Lungu, "War.com," 16.

groups, and individuals. The purpose of psychological operations is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behavior favorable to the originator's objectives.<sup>98</sup>

Basically, any information intended to influence a foreign audience is a PSYOP product. E-mails, 'blog entries, pictures, videos, or text in Web pages are all PSYOP, as long as their intent is to influence "foreign governments, organizations, groups, [or] individuals" in a way that is "favorable to the originator's objectives." This describes virtually any activity in which the US military could possibly engage except purely informational content for the American public (public affairs products). The American paranoia about the government influencing the public has completely barred the US military from operating on the Internet.

## **Free People**

It is so fundamental that it is easily overlooked, but this entire RMA rests on the premise that the public being influenced also has influence over its government. After all, there is no point in trying to sway the "passions" of the people in the United States except to overcome the "reason" of the government. Were the government not responsive to the people, their opinion or feelings about Iraq, this RMA would be much less effective.

But, if this RMA is meant to undo what Clausewitz called the "reason" of national security policy by attacking the "passion" of the people, and the majority of people are now in favor of some form of withdrawal from Iraq (in April 2007, 64 percent of the people favored a timetable for withdrawal)<sup>99</sup> why is the US military still in Iraq? The answer is that the US is a representative republic rather than a true democracy. The American people usually only get to vote in national elections once every two years. And, because head of state and the commander-

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<sup>98</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Headquarters Department of Defense, JP 3-53, *Joint Doctrine for Psychological Operations* (Washington, DC, 5 September 2003), GL-7.

<sup>99</sup> CBS News, "Poll: Most Back Congress In Iraq Showdown," [On-line] available from <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/04/26/opinion/polls/main2731960.shtml>; Internet: accessed 10 May 2007.

in-chief are the enumerated powers of the President, the American people normally only get to vote directly on foreign policy and national defense issues once every four years.<sup>100</sup>

By late Spring 2007, an interesting dynamic had emerged in America which illustrates the complex interaction between the government, public opinion, and the media. The Congress passed a bill which, in addition to funding the war in Iraq, set a timetable for withdrawal. As stated above, American public opinion supported this bill by 64 percent. The President, however, vetoed the bill. The Senate, split 51-49 in favor of the Democrat-sponsored bill, was unable to override the veto. The vote was split along party rather than public opinion lines. Rather than responding directly to the popular mood, House and Senate Republicans seemed to be making a political calculation based on what they believed would be the condition of Iraq in Fall 2008, when they would again be up for reelection. In part, this opinion was informed by congressional testimony from General David Petraeus, the commander of Multi-National Force-Iraq.<sup>101</sup> But it was also informed by reports in the media of conditions in Iraq.

Lest one draw a comparison with fourth generation warfare (4GW) or classic anti-colonial insurgency doctrine, it is important to make a distinction here. In these earlier forms of warfare, the insurgent commits violence in order to convince political leaders that their cause is hopeless; the strategy is to appeal to the reason of policy-makers in order to force a withdrawal. Congressmen and senators have the opportunity to travel to Iraq. In fact, a study in August 2007 showed that 75 sitting US senators had been to Iraq.<sup>102</sup> The same study found that nearly half of

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<sup>100</sup> Of course, foreign policy is frequently an issue in congressional elections, but mandates are more difficult to discern from these elections, as foreign policy concerns are often obscured by local issues.

<sup>101</sup> David S. Broder, "A War the Public Will End," *Washington Post*, 6 May 2007, B07.

<sup>102</sup> Patrick Fitzgerald, "'Have you been to Iraq?' — 76 sen[ator]s say they have," [On-Line] available from <http://thehill.com/leading-the-news/have-you-been-to-iraq--76-sens.-say-they-have-2007-08-01.html>; Internet, accessed 26 August 2007.

all freshman congressmen, 24 of 55, had traveled to Iraq.<sup>103</sup> (Unfortunately, those who do travel to Iraq seldom spend more than a single day there, usually visiting only a location or two in the International Zone.) Political leaders also have access to senior military leaders and intelligence which the average American lacks. Responsible public officials, armed with direct observation of the war in Iraq, US intelligence, and answers from senior US military leaders must know that the enemy will never defeat the US militarily. When a political leader sees news reports in the media, he is making a political calculation about how the news stories will effect his constituency. He is also making a political calculation about whether the news will improve before his next election. Thus, political leaders are not influenced by media-enabled insurgency, but by the effect they perceive that media-enabled insurgency is having on the American people.

### **The New Cost of Freedom**

Media-enabled insurgency can only be exercised against a liberal democracy. It is because of the American tradition of a free and independent press that the US government is not able to limit US media access to the operational area. This tradition also hinders the ability of the US government to impose restrictions or even accountability on adversary media. This tradition even limits the ability of the US military to use local media to influence the populace in the operational area. The right to free speech in America cripples the US military's ability to disrupt or challenge the enemy's use of the Internet. As a result of these limitations, the enemy has complete freedom of action in the media battlespace.

The American government's solution to this problem in past wars has been national mobilization. The previous section chronicled the measures the US government employed in World War I and II to limit the production of visual information. But these extreme measures all

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<sup>103</sup> Patrick Fitzgerald, "Many House freshmen make Iraq visit," [On-Line] available from <http://thehill.com/leading-the-news/many-house-freshmen-make-iraq-visit-2007-08-01.html>; Internet, accessed 26 August 2007.

require that the nation's sense of "free security" be violated, that the population be conditioned by national mobilization to accept temporary surrender of freedoms for the greater good.

Such a dramatic transformation of the national psyche requires a strategic shock which shatters the nation's illusion of free security. The strategic shocks that began the current war, the Global War on Terrorism, were the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on 11 September 2001. But this mobilization did not occur. Americans were told that the terrorists were attacking America because she was free; if Americans gave up some of their freedoms, the terrorists somehow achieved victory.<sup>104</sup>

Perhaps it was a mistake to cast this war as a War on Terrorism. Perhaps, if the war had been cast as a war against nations that support terrorism, mobilization would have been possible. Maybe one could have parsed the argument: this was a War on Terrorism but the nation had to approach it in a new way (requiring the surrender of some freedoms on a limited basis).

These possibilities have faded now; the die is cast. The US military is engaged in a war while the American people, in obedience to the first direction of their President, are remaining vigilant while going about their normal lives.<sup>105</sup> The sting of the attacks has faded and it is now impossible to rekindle the anger necessary to persuade Americans to willingly cede their freedoms. For the remainder of the war in Iraq, and probably the Global War on Terrorism, the US military will be permanently handicapped in its ability to challenge the enemy in the media battlespace.

## Conclusion

This monograph has sought to deconstruct into its component parts the enemy RMA of media-enabled insurgency--the ability to use small, tactically insignificant attacks, magnified by the megaphone of the media, to erode the will of the American public to fight the war in Iraq.

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<sup>104</sup> Gaddis, *Surprise*, 37.

Once these parts were identified, analogous examples in history were examined, to see if methods were found in the past to defeat these components. This section will recap these findings and, using the successful methods identified, try to construct a method to defeat this enemy capability. It will then conclude with some recommendations for areas of further study on this important topic.

## Summary

This monograph examined media-enabled insurgency in light of the two of five components of an RMA as described in the Introduction: technology and opponent. However, it began by identifying who, in particular, was using media-enabled insurgency in Iraq.

## The Enemy

Secondary Question: What groups in Iraq employ this RMA (e.g. who is the enemy)?

The section, “The Enemy in Iraq,” identified that rather than a single, monolithic organization, the enemy is actually an anarchic collection of disparate, often competing organizations. Of this large number of armed groups, the organizations of concern to this monograph all share two things in common: their use of media-enabled insurgency and desire to expel the US military from Iraq. Four types of enemy use this capability.

1. Shia militias
2. Sunni insurgents
3. Al-Qaeda in Iraq
4. State engaged in proxy war (Iran and Syria)

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

## Technology

Secondary Question: What are the technological requirements for this RMA?

Tertiary Question: What technology does the enemy in Iraq use to attack the will of the American people through the media?

The next section found that a number of technological innovations, including the communication satellite, cheap, standardized computers, and a networked electronic communications infrastructure have combined to produce 24-hour television news networks and the Internet. These innovations have exponentially increased the amount of visual information the average American is exposed to concerning all current events, including the war in Iraq.

Tertiary Question: Have analogous technological advances been seen in the past and, if so, were effective methods found to defeat them?

This monograph showed that efforts to prevent the dissemination of visual images at the point of receipt are probably not feasible in a liberal democracy in the modern age. It also found that limiting the collection and creation of visual images, while successful as recently as the Gulf War, probably is not technically feasible in a long, counterinsurgency war, where it is impossible to control access to the battlefield. The nature of the United States and the military that serves it might also prevent such restrictions.

## Opponent

Secondary Question: What is the nature of an opponent against which this RMA may be applied?

Tertiary Question: What are the key features of the US that make it vulnerable to this RMA?

Tertiary Question: Why do these features exist in the US and are there feasible methods for making the US less vulnerable?

The vulnerabilities that make America susceptible to this enemy RMA are deeply rooted in the nature of the country itself. The tradition of freedom of the press not only makes it impossible for the US military to limit Western media's access to the war, it also makes it difficult for the US to restrict or influence adversary media. The tradition of free speech prevents the US military from attacking enemy Internet sites or using the Internet to distribute PSYOP products. The nature of the United States as a representative republic means that influence exerted by the enemy, through the media, on the American people eventually has an impact on American foreign and defense policy.

This monograph cited many instances in American history where these freedoms were temporarily restricted with the consent of the people. But to give this consent, the population must be mobilized in support of war. No such mobilization happened for Iraq or the Global War on Terrorism. The strategic shock of 9/11 has passed and no such mobilization is now possible. It is now impossible, even temporarily, to change the nature of America to "harden" it against this enemy RMA.

## **Engineered Handicap**

With these secondary and tertiary questions answered, it is finally possible to answer the primary research question.

Primary Question: Why is the enemy so effective in using the media to attack the will of the American people?

This study began by stating that military effectiveness derives from the potency of a military force, the impotency of its opponent, or both. The evidence uncovered in this monograph clearly shows that it is US military ineffectiveness, rather than enemy effectiveness, which has made media-enabled insurgency such a devastating capability. Even more disheartening, this study has shown that this ineffectiveness is at least partially engineered and intentional.

Technology has made it increasingly difficult to control the flow of information (especially, and

most importantly, visual images). Simultaneously, the American people and their elected representatives have restricted the ability of the US military to do so. In short, the US military is intentionally handicapped in its ability to influence (or counter-influence) the American people.

This is not to say that the US military should cede the media to the enemy. The US military must find new ways to leverage its overwhelming advantage in military might to defeat enemy media efforts. The US military must understand the system that brings coverage out of the operational area into the media battlespace, challenge the enemy for control of this system, and achieve superiority. Stringers, reporters, and regional bureaus are the manifestation of the media in the operational area. They are also the conduit by which coverage of events leaves the operational area and enters the media. This is the “media system” that the US military must protect from enemy influence in order to achieve dominance.

The truth invariably favors the United States. Reporters held hostage in their fortress-like regional bureaus by security concerns are no more informed than pundits in Washington. The US military must expend combat power to secure reporters in and around their bureaus, transport them to the stories they want to cover, and embed them liberally. And they should do it all free of cost to the media; money not spent on logistics is spent sending more reporters to the operational area, which also favors the US military. When bad news breaks, the US military must be ruthless in finding out the facts and getting them to the media as quickly as possible, lest the enemy fill the void with lies.

The US military should stop trying to “out-propaganda” the enemy. America is only going to defeat the enemy’s media efforts by putting a priority on the media commensurate with its importance. That means expending a significant portion of its military might to bring the facts to the American people and the world.

## Areas For Further Research

This study has not attempted to be exhaustive, but rather to focus on the essential elements of the battle for the will of the American people. There are many areas that fell beyond the delimitations set at the beginning of the research process. This monograph will close by suggesting some areas where further investigation might be most productive.

First, more study is needed in defining the scope of this new media “dimension” described earlier in this section. Is the will of the American people to prosecute the war now an operational center of gravity (rather than the traditional view of public will as a strategic center of gravity)? If this change has occurred, when did it happen and why?

Looking at the recommendations made in this monograph, especially in the area of facilitating the media, some additional questions arise as to how this might be accomplished, practically, in a military operation. When and with whom should this planning be done? Should media outlets be involved in the initial planning, prior to conflict initiation? What OPSEC concerns might this raise? Who would decide which media outlets would and would not be included, and how would they make this determination?

Finally, this monograph has only studied the “defensive” aspects of operations in the media “battlespace” (e.g., protecting the will of the American people). How does a joint force, at the operational level of war, conduct “offensive” operations in the media battlespace: attacking the will of the enemy’s populace or constituency, outside the operational area, to continue to oppose the US? How does a joint force “attack” the perceptions of people *inside* the operational area? These are all topics that merit further study.

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